

Our On-Site Partners

- Association of Haitian Women (AFAB)
- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center
- Boston Police Department / Family Justice Division
 - Crimes Against Children Unit
 - Domestic Violence (DV) Unit
 - MA Human Trafficking Task Force
- Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) of Suffolk County
 - The CAC's On-site Partners:
 - The Child Witness to Violence Project of Boston Medical Center
 - MA Department of Social Services
 - MA Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
 - MA Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (PediSANE)
 - The Trauma Center at JRI
- Casa Myrna Vazquez
- Dress for Success Boston
- Finex House / Kim's Project
- Gay Men's Domestic Violence Project
- GLBT DV Attorney Program
- Greater Boston Legal Services
- MA Alliance of Portuguese Speakers
- MA Department of Transitional Assistance DV Unit
- The Network/ La Red
- Suffolk County DA's Office / Family Protection and Sexual Assault Unit
- Victim Rights Law Center

Collaboration Works:

SAGE-Boston Improves the Response to Older Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse
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From Victim to Advocate

The Proud Journey of Antoinette Lasseur



Antoinette Lasseur works as an advocate and mentor for Kim's Project, which is a survivor-centered initiative reaching out to women involved in prostitution. Kim's Project is a relatively recent program offered by Finex House, a provider of shelter, peer counseling, advocacy and other services for families fleeing domestic violence since 1983. Ms. Lasseur was asked to describe her experiences within and apart from Kim's Project.

The goal of Kim's project is to improve the lives of women involved in prostitution who are the victims of sexual exploitation and violence. My personal goal is to address the needs of young women "aging out" of the care of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Youth Services (DYS). I know first hand what it is like to age out of the system with little or no support.

I went through various foster homes and ended up involved with DYS. At 18 I was "put out" on my own with no viable skills, education, or permanent place to live. So, it's no surprise that I ended up in a domestic violence shelter last year. Now, I am preparing to enter college next year.

But more importantly, I work here as an Advocate/Mentor for other young women caught up in a violent relationship, involved in the adult court systems, and/or with long histories of abuse and involvement with DYS/DSS. I recently organized a GED tutoring session for participants in Kim's Project on Saturday mornings here at the Family Justice Center. I have interns that come in from AmeriCorps Tutors. The tutors are affiliated with the Media And Technology Charter High School (MATCH), which is a next-door neighbor of the FJC.

The interns are a great, committed group of young women that do one-on-one tutoring. We have a great time, and we are all able to support each other in our efforts to achieve higher goals for ourselves. We are doing new and exciting things at the Family Justice Center! I am here at the FJC five days a week part-time. Knowing that I can help to change the course of another young person's life is what gets me here everyday.

This past year, I assisted a young woman into Bridge Over Troubled Water's GED program.

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Family Justice Center of Boston

Open for service
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9:00 am –5:00 pm

989 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston MA 02215

617 779-2100

Boston-based Collaborative Works to Improve the Response to Older Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse

Joanne Brewer, MPH / Assistant Director, Domestic Violence Program, Boston Public Health Commission

"The term 'elder abuse' typically brings to mind a frail elder who is being physically hurt or neglected by an adult child or caretaker. This common perception fails to recognize the prevalence and impact of emotional, financial, and sexual forms of abuse."

All forms of physical assault and many of the non-physical forms of abuse are against the law, and victims of abuse have rights to legal protection. Unfortunately, despite significant improvements in elder abuse and domestic violence laws, reporting requirements, legal remedies and social services available to victims of elder abuse and intimate partner abuse, the problem of *intimate partner abuse against elders* has remained largely invisible. The term "elder abuse" typically brings to mind a frail elder who is being physically hurt or neglected by an adult child or caretaker. This common perception fails to recognize the prevalence and impact of emotional, financial, and sexual forms of abuse.

The terms "domestic violence" and "intimate partner abuse" typically bring to mind a young to middle-aged woman, usually with children, who is being abused by her husband or boyfriend. This fails to acknowledge that abuse does not go away with age or the fact that older men are just as capable of violence as younger men.

The stereotypes and stigma that keep younger gay men and lesbians who are abused by a partner from getting help are even more pronounced

for older LGBT victims.

All of these stereotypical views of abuse and its victims have prevented providers in both the aging services network and the domestic violence network from recognizing that many older women and men are abused by current or former partners, some having suffered at the hands of their abuser for decades.

Another dangerous myth about elders is that it's too late to change- too late for an abuser to stop his/her violent and controlling behaviors, and too late for a victim to seek safety and regain control of his/her life. *Older victims of partner abuse can and do leave their abusers*, sometimes after decades of progressively violent abuse. However, like their younger counterparts, elders face very real barriers to seeking safety, both individual and societal, which may be exacerbated due to circumstances related to aging and ageism. Some of these barriers include:

- Fear of retaliation by the abuser
- Stigma and shame, belief that they are to blame
- Loyalty toward partners or adult children
- Religious beliefs and other cultural traditions that forbid divorce

- Fear of losing income, Social Security benefits or health insurance
- Fear of losing ones home or nursing home placement
- Fears related to immigration/refugee status
- Language and cultural barriers
- Physical and mental health effects of repeated trauma
- Chronic illness and disabilities: limited mobility and limited functional status (i.e., self care)
- Isolation, lack of social support
- Dependence on the abusive partner for health related care and activities of daily living
- Low arrest and prosecution rates for older abusers, i.e. low accountability for abusive behaviors
- Fragmentation of health and social services
- Providers disbelieving, missing, or minimizing signs of abuse

A critical first step in addressing these numerous barriers is to increase awareness within the aging, domestic violence, criminal justice, health care, and other service networks that partner abuse happens across the lifespan, and that the needs of older victims

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FJC Partner Profile:

Micaela Cohen / Boston Area Rape Crisis Center



Organization: Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC)

Name / Position: Micaela Cohen, Clinical Coordinator of Medical Advocacy

Organizational Mission / Vision: The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center's mission is to end sexual violence through healing and social change. Established in 1973, BARCC is the *only organization* providing comprehensive rape crisis services in the greater Boston area. BARCC offers free services in Spanish, English, French and Haitian Creole, including: a 24-hour crisis counseling hotline; individual, group and family counseling; medical advocacy; legal advocacy; case management; and community awareness and prevention services.

What do you do for BARCC?

I coordinate the clinical operations of our Medical Advocacy Program. Our 40 advocates are certified Rape Crisis Counselors who support survivors and significant others presenting for post-assault exams at hospitals throughout the Greater Boston Area. As one can imagine, there are a lot of issues that can come up for the advocates, including feeling traumatized by these experiences. I train our advocates to be prepared for the various situations that they might encounter during a case, and then debrief with them and

try to support them with the goal of preventing secondary traumatization so that they can continue doing this important work.

Why is BARCC an on-site partner at the Family Justice Center of Boston?

BARCC is an organization that embraces and understands the value of family health and the impact of sexual violence on health. We work with survivors, parents of survivors, children of survivors, couples, and even roommates of survivors to ensure that the "family" unit is getting the support that it needs in order to remain healthy. Sometimes this translates into therapy for the invested parties, sometimes it means looking into legal options or even ensuring that the survivor and family have a safe place to live or stay following an assault. At BARCC, we know that the recovery of the survivor is dependent on the recovery of the family – whomever that might include for each person.

This makes BARCC an excellent match for the FJC because we try to consider various contributing factors that result in the situation that any of our clients face, and then attempt to ascertain the options that are available to them. Being a part of the FJC has given us access to more of these options for our clients. At the same time, we provide a place for adolescent and adult survivors of sexual assault and their significant others to seek various kinds of help. This service complements the work being done by our partner agencies and, hopefully, provides more options for them to offer clients as well.

How does your partnership at the FJC help to advance your organization's mission?

BARCC's placement at the FJC has been valuable in helping us advance our agency's mission in numerous ways. First of all, the collaboration among the partner agencies at the FJC has allowed us to offer further resources and services to our clients as they think about the legal, logistical and health related issues that they are faced with following an assault. Sec-

ond, in the spirit of reaching more survivors in need, it is great to partner with agencies who are doing complementary work. It helps us to keep hope that one day, we might reach all of the survivors and help support each one.

BARCC uses and promotes an empowerment model in working with clients, whether they are survivors, families or significant others. This meshes with the FJC's efforts to provide a range of services to clients so that each client has *options* and as much autonomy as possible in thinking about how to address difficult situations. BARCC believes in the power of giving our clients choices, and being involved with the partner agencies at the FJC makes many more of the choices we offer feasible.

What are the biggest challenges that BARCC must overcome to advance its mission?

Like many of our partner agencies, BARCC experiences challenges in many places on the road to helping our clients. One of the bigger challenges is adequately handling the demand for services in the Boston Area for survivor services and education about these issues. While we reach out to a myriad of agencies and populations, there is always a feeling that there is so much more work to be done and so many more people to reach. BARCC's various programs work with individuals, families and even communities to provide awareness, in order to strengthen the foundation of knowledge and services in these areas. It's easy to get overzealous in thinking about further possibilities and facets in which we can help to educate others, but we work together to stay grounded and focus on the projects of the moment, which keeps our programs and services solid.

What motivates you to show up every day?

I am lucky to work with such dynamic, brilliant and compassionate colleagues and volunteers. It's easy to put time into a program full of volunteers that are dedicated to the work that they

"The collaboration among the partner agencies at the FJC has allowed us to offer further resources and services to our clients as they think about the legal, logistical and health related issues that they are faced with following an assault."

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From Victim to Advocate (cont'd)

"We are all working together to address the vulnerability of youth 'aging out' of the foster care/DYS systems."

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This young woman was previously involved with the courts and DSS/DYS and had a long history of abuse and violence. She entered into our Supportive Housing Program. Last month, she successfully completed 3 out of 5 tests for her GED, and is ready to finish at the end of this month. She also attends our Saturday

tutoring classes. She frequently calls me for support and to update me on her accomplishments. Creating a sense of community is what it is all about, especially for young people that have limited positive family support. I also work with some of the young women referred out of the Children's Advocacy Center's Teen Prostitution Prevention Project and the Massachusetts Human Trafficking Task

Force, both located here at the FJC. We are all working together to address the vulnerability of youth "aging out" of the foster care/DYS systems. I can relate to these young people because I have had similar experiences, and I have high expectations for myself and for the young women I work with. **WE WILL ALL SUCCEED!**

Boston-based Collaborative Works to Improve the Response to Older Victims of Intimate Partner Abuse (cont'd)

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are often quite complex. One group working to do this in the Greater Boston area is SAGE-Boston (Stop Abuse, Gain Empowerment), a multi-disciplinary collaboration of agencies and individuals working to end intimate partner abuse in later life by improving the community response to women age 60+ and older survivors from the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender community.

The Collaborative brings together providers, advocates, and consumers from the aging network, elder protective services, domestic violence/sexual assault agencies, health care agencies, criminal justice departments, educational institutions, and others to network, educate each other, and think creatively about how our agencies and

systems can better meet the needs of all victims.

A key to the success of SAGE-Boston has been that, through it, providers in the two traditionally separate fields of aging and domestic violence have made a commitment to continuous learning, creative thinking, and collaboration. In March of 2004, SAGE-Boston was one of seven programs recognized nationally by the American Society on Aging and the Pfizer Humanities Foundation as a "high-quality, innovative initiative that enhances the health related quality of life in older adults."

The Collaborative has played a critical role in a number of important local and national activities all aimed to improve the response to elders who are abused by an intimate partner. SAGE-

Boston has presented at conferences nationwide, and has developed a comprehensive training that aims to give providers the information and skills to recognize and respond to victims safely and effectively.

SAGE-Boston is always looking for new members, community partners, and training opportunities. The group meets monthly, and is open to anyone. Survivors and elders themselves have been actively engaged in the Collaborative since its inception, and are encouraged to participate. If you would like to attend a monthly meeting, for more information about the SAGE-Boston Collaborative, or to request training for your agency, please e-mail the SAGE Coordinator at :

sagecoordinator@comcast.net.

If you or someone you know is being abused, you can seek help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling SafeLink at: 877-785-2020 (TTY 877-521-2601) or the Elder Abuse Hotline at 800-922-2275 (V/TTY)

FJC Parter Profile (cont'd)**Micaela Cohen / BARCC**

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do, and it makes me want to do a great job as a way of showing appreciation to them. I have had the opportunity to see countless cases in which an advocate has supported a survivor and/or significant other through a case and has made the experience of a hospital visit more healing than traumatizing. Our hope is that we are able to empower our clients in a time when they are feeling weak, and that the education and control of choices that we offer might be the first of many steps in healing. The fact that our advocates have the power to do this makes me proud of the work we do and challenges me to give as much to the program as the advocates give to their clients.

How has collaboration with other FJC partners helped you in your work?

Collaboration with the FJC partners has been valuable to my work with Medical Advocacy in a variety of ways. First, as is consistent with the empowerment model, we try to offer our clients as many options as possible when it comes to medical care, counseling services and legal action. Before working closely with the breadth of services available at the FJC, there was a disconnect between offering these services and being able to help facilitate delivery. The close proximity of the partner agencies is helping to move BARCC and Boston to a more humane and seamless delivery of services.

Secondly, BARCC's FJC collaboration has given us an opportunity to form working relationships with the essential agencies with whom we share clients. This has strengthened the services that we can offer because we have an

understanding of the perspectives and missions of many other agencies with an invested interest. In particular, I think about the PediSANE (Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) nurses who work within the FJC, and how our communication, education and collaboration has truly helped us to offer a united team when working with survivors in the hospital. The value of this relationship is evident when we work with survivors who have the benefit of receiving care and support from a team, instead of two individual entities.

What has surprised you most about your partnership at the FJC?

I have been most surprised by the fact that there is fabulous frozen yogurt just across the street. Just kidding. I have been pleasantly surprised by the number of opportunities for continued education that are available by working at the FJC. In the short time that I have worked here, I have had the opportunity to see the collaboration and number of questions asked regarding "what do *you* do?" grow into a cooperative that promotes education above all. Again, within the ideals of the empowerment model, this is a great asset to BARCC and the Medical Advocacy Program because it makes it possible for us to offer more services and to understand more about what we are offering. There is a face and a name to go with referrals to Victim Rights Law Center (VRLC), and we understand what clients may have experienced in their work with the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC). This opportunity for

education of the pipeline of services and agencies in the larger system of family health promotion has grown so much in just the few months that I have worked here. I have been surprised at the interest in collaboration and how naturally these conversations have taken place.

What additional services would you like to see offered at the FJC and why?

I would like to see mentoring services at the FJC. I think that it would be great to hold psycho-educational forums or classes that might help families consider how they can be healthier and to give them more tools in creating sustainable healthy environments. These mentoring services could be for adolescents who are in need of positive role models, for new parents, or even for seasoned parents who find themselves having a difficult time. We offer a lot of response-based services, but I would like to think about offering services that focus on prevention and life-skills. I think that this would fit well within the context of the other services we provide, as referrals could be made by the various agencies at the FJC who have clients or families in need of such supports.

**The Boston Area
Rape Crisis Center's
office at the
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is open
Monday to Friday
9:00 am –5:00 pm**

"The value of this relationship is evident when we work with survivors who have the benefit of receiving care and support from a team, instead of two individual entities."

Our Mission

The Family Justice Center (FJC) of Boston fosters collaboration in service to victims of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault. We provide a safe and welcoming environment where individuals and families benefit from the availability of services offered by diverse nonprofit and governmental partner organizations. We are committed to complementing and enhancing the health of victim service organizations throughout Boston. As a hub of cooperative activity, the FJC facilitates continuous learning and serves as a resource center for professional development. We strive to coordinate violence intervention and prevention services that are culturally responsive and accessible to all victims.

Our Vision

The Family Justice Center of Boston envisions justice for victims of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault.

Justice for victims will mean that:

- ◇ Police, prosecutors and service providers collaborate closely and offer coordinated responses which minimize additional trauma and promote the safety, dignity, well-being and rights of all.
 - ◇ Law enforcement and criminal justice practices reflect a deep understanding of the dynamics of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault.
 - ◇ Useful information about available services and support reaches everyone who needs it.
 - ◇ Governmental and community-based organizations are culturally responsive; provide appropriate, accessible and equitable services to all who need them; and are accountable to the communities that they serve.
 - ◇ There are no gaps in service or “cracks in the system”.
 - ◇ Victims are respected and are never blamed for the violence and abuse.
 - ◇ Child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault are not socially tolerated.
- ⇒ **Rates of child abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault are reduced until we are able to stop these crimes entirely.**

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**989 Common-
wealth Avenue
Boston MA 02215**

617 779-2100

Events and Opportunities

Getting to the FJC

The FJC is located near the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Babcock St. in Brighton.

Parking: Metered parking is available. Ask about special parking for victims at the front desk.

By the "T": Take the Green Line "B" train (Boston College) to either the Pleasant Street or the Babcock Street stop (just past BU's Agganis Arena); both are less than one block from the Family Justice Center.

On the MBTA Bus: Take any of the following bus routes to Kenmore Square: 8, 57, 60, 65, 8A. Board the 57 Bus towards Watertown Yard. Get off at the Brighton Avenue Stop (by Shaws Supermarket). Walk 2 blocks east to 989 Comm. Ave.

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Children's Advocacy Center of Suffolk County Seminar Series

DSS: The Decision to go to Court

Irene Herman, Esq. Boston Regional Counsel,
Department of Social Services

DSS is routinely faced with situations in which children are not safe at home. The stakes are especially high when parents are considered the perpetrators of abuse or neglect, or when they're unable to protect their children. What happens when the Department of Social Services decides to take a case to court and to ask the court to remove children from their parents' custody? Hear how DSS clinical and legal staff work together to decide when to file a Care and Protection Petition. Learn about what happens after court action is initiated.

Thursday April 12, 2007

9:30 am – 11:00 am

Northeastern University

360 Huntington Avenue

Curry Student Center, Rooms 318,320-322

Take the Green Line to Northeastern or the Orange Line to Ruggles
Parking available at the Renaissance Park Garage, 788 Columbus Avenue

For additional information, contact the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC)
617 779-2146 or cac@suf.state.ma.us

Co-sponsored by Center for Community Health, Education, Research and Services (CCHERS)

The CAC Seminar Series is offered free of charge and no pre-registration is required!

FJC Staff Directory

To speak with an FJC Partner organization or for general information, please call the main number: (617) 779-2100. Our reception staff, **Ellena Haile** and **Verlana Morales**, will be glad to help you.

For information about the FJC's child care service, please call the main desk and ask to speak with: **Nancy Reyes, Child Care Specialist**

To make a financial or in-kind contribution to the FJC, for inquiries related to outreach, communications or volunteer / internship opportunities, and for general information, please contact: **Richard Amory, Assistant Development Director** (617) 779-2152
richard.amory@cityofboston.gov